NBA
STREET
V3
The Haul
NINTENDO GAMECUBE
ALL STARS
EVERYONE
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ESRB
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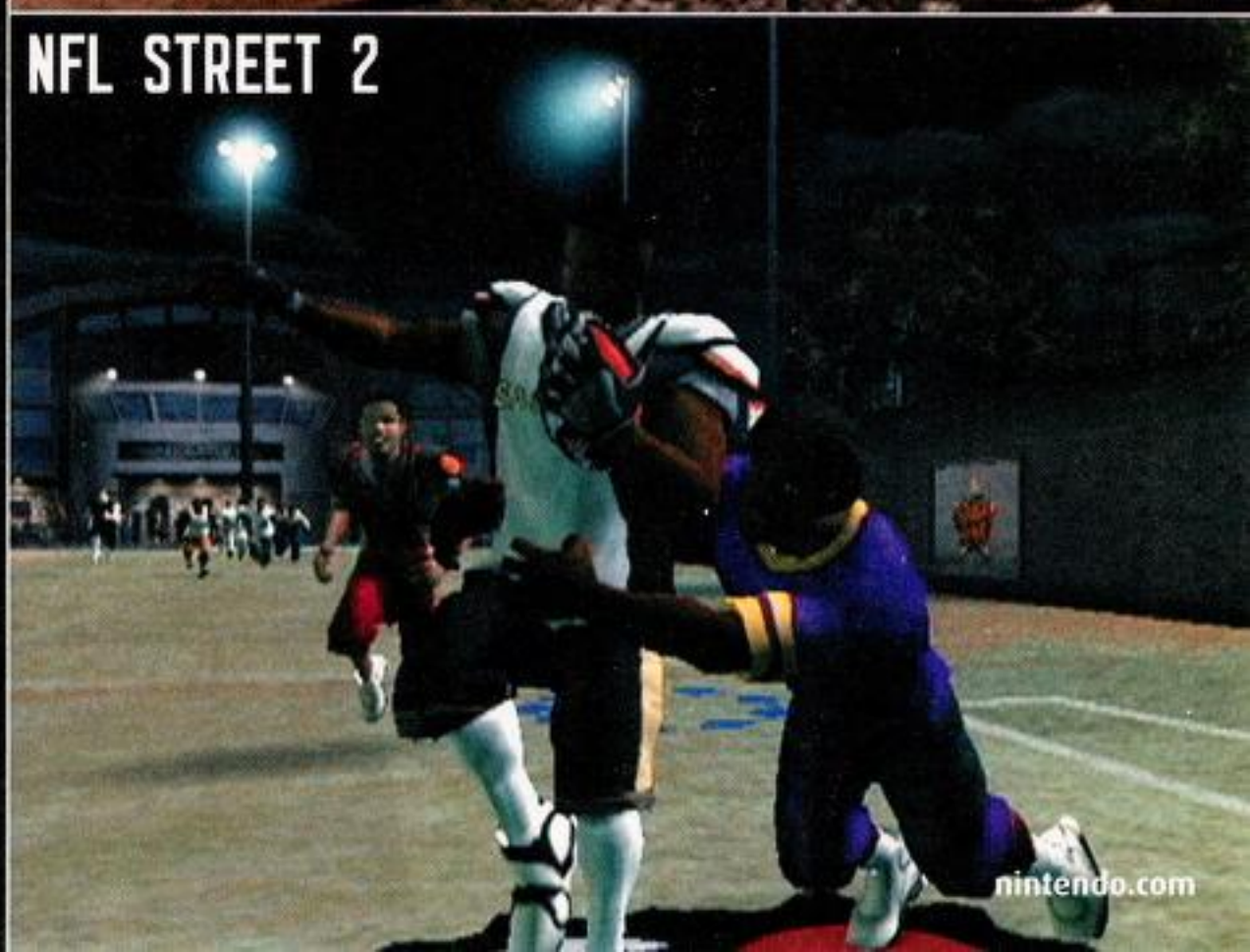
NINTENDO POWER

STREET SMARTS

EA SHOOTS AND SCORES WITH A STREET-GAME TRIPLE THREAT AND A HUGE GCN EXCLUSIVE!

Although the acrobatic fireworks and ball-handling wizardry that the athletes of EA's Street titles (NBA Street, NFL Street and the upcoming FIFA Street) are capable of seem larger than life, it's a grounded sense of familiarity and believability that Wil Mozell (executive producer of NBA Street V3 and FIFA Street) points to in assessing EA's Street-game popularity. The real-life street-hoops scene has been big for decades, especially in the northeastern United States, while street soccer has gained ground internationally over the last few years, and those trends translate to video game awareness. "It's really about the grass roots of a sport. It may not have the commercial recognition of the professional game, but it's a bigger experience," said Mozell in a recent NP interview. And, even though the spectacular five-foot-high leaps of NBA Street V3, off-the-wall passes of FIFA Street and mountain-of-men-carrying heroics of NFL Street 2 are more impressive than what you'd expect to see in a playground pickup game, the Street titles have what Mozell calls a sense of "heightened reality"—the games are highlight reels that unspool as you play. "If somebody tried [a stunt on the order of a Street-game maneuver] a thousand times, they might be successful once. There's a way for people to embrace [the game] when you make them feel like they're part of something really cool."

That special-event feeling extends to a never-before-attempted addition to February's NBA Street V3 release: the GCN-only inclusion of Mario, Luigi and Princess Peach as the Nintendo All-Stars team, complete with their own Mushroom Kingdom court. The Nintendo icons mixing it up with NBA stars is quite a sight to see.



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BODY LANGUAGE

A flyer in Mozell's office reads "Parlez-vouz Nutmeg?" (Do you speak Nutmeg?) and displays a map that calls out regional nicknames for the Nutmeg, the soccer maneuver in which a player kicks the ball between his opponent's legs. Alternate names range from descriptive (The Tunnel, Between the Posts) to obscure (Christmas Crib, The Little Newspaper), but the popularity of the move is clear. It's fun to show up your opponent. The latest wave of Street games lets players prove their quick-footed, body-juking dominance with dozens of impossibly smooth moves. In NBA Street V3 and FIFA Street, the C Stick (aka the Trick Stick) triggers maneuvers that build a player's Gamebreaker meter. FIFA Street trick moves send the ball over, around or through opponents in ways that are designed to put the other player off his game, highlighting the in-your-face expression of the Street franchise. NBA Street V3 moves are spectacular spinning displays that players can rename. "You can actually own a move and show people that it is yours," says Mozell. "It's something simple, but in the game experience, it's a big payoff. It's like you're leaving your mark on the game."

When the developers of NFL Street 2 brainstormed trick moves, they considered making "a more vertical game with jumps as high as you would see in the NBA Street series," says executive producer Dale Jackson. "But we ultimately decided that basketball is a game played in the air and football is basically played on the ground. We found a middle ground that is just right and that's where wall moves came into place."

Athletes run up walls to hurdle over opponents and to catch lofty passes in NFL Street 2's trick-move frenzy. If a player manages to perform a wall move (a juke, a catch or a tackle) against a hot spot on the wall, the player's team logo appears on the wall and a new athlete is unlocked for pickup-game play.

Whatever you call it, a FIFA Street kick between the legs is a great opponent-embarrassing play.

As the player strings together moves in NBA Street V3, icons appear at the top of the display and build up to a scoring combo. Spectacular combos lead to big Gamebreaker bonuses.

YOU BREAK IT, THEY BUY IT

The Gamebreaker, a Street-game signature play, is aptly named. It adds points to one team's score and takes points from the opposing team, which is particularly significant given that games are played to a set point total. The move can really break a game wide open. NBA Street V3 innovates with what EA terms the Interactive Gamebreaker. Once the player has earned enough trick points to fill the Gamebreaker meter, he has about 30 seconds to pull off an amazing shot. "In previous versions, all you wanted to do was an outside shot, because that's where you got the most points," explains Mozell. "So what we did [with V3] is we reversed the psychology and we said that the dunk is the show. The dunk is the big moment in basketball, so let's blow it out and make it huge." During a Gamebreaker dunk, the player can perform a long string of in-air moves, then pass the ball to another athlete and perform another big combo, continuing for as long as the player can keep the ball airborne. As the maneuver continues, a point total at the top of the screen climbs from one to four. Once the ball goes in the hoop, that number of points is added to the gamebreaking player's score and one point is taken away from the opposing team. Says Mozell, "the cool part about it is if you're greedy and you want to go for it, go ahead, but you could fail."

Since the ball changes possession quickly in soccer, the FIFA Street team decided that a 30-second limit is not appropriate for their Gamebreaker. Instead, the prize is a super shot that the player can pull off at any time.

NFL Street 2 adds the Gamebreaker 2, which requires twice as many style points as a standard Gamebreaker but guarantees a score in a cut-scene-style treatment. Strategy figures into the player's decision either to trigger the first Gamebreaker or to save up for the second one.

Do you settle for a two-point bump with a conservative dunk or go for the Gamebreaker gusto and risk failure? You decide.

A Gamebreaker shot's chance of success depends on the number of defenders between the ball and the goal.

More powerful than the Gamebreaker, NFL Street 2's Gamebreaker 2 is an over-the-middle stunner.

GIMME THE BALL: NFL STREET 2 RUNS WITH SIX RULE-REWRITING STREET EVENTS

NFL Street's executive producer Jackson says, "Street football is where most people started playing football as kids in the backyards across America. People relate to this." To make the connection even stronger between recently released NFL Street 2 and what players experience on the playground, the sequel offers a batch of street events that break away from the seven-on-seven game. The Crush the Carrier event is an every-player-for-himself game of keep-away. The Jump Ball Battle is an elbow-throwing free-for-all between receivers going after Hail Mary passes. In other events, team sizes range from one to four players. It's a different game with each new team configuration.

COURT ORDER

There are 13 courts in NBA Street V3 and, with the exception of the Mushroom Kingdom, all of them are based on real-life street venues, such as well-known New York City sites Rucker Park and The Cage and the lesser-known Gun Hill, along with Pittsburgh's The Hawk (named after street-ball and NBA legend Connie Hawkins), Baltimore's The Dome and Foss Park in Chicago. "Every single one is perfect to its real-life counterpart," boasts Mozell. "We spent lots of time and money making sure that we have the best photographers and everything to understand the essence of what these courts are." The new NBA Street Court Creator lets a player develop a unique venue, from the surface to the skyline, and build its reputation over the course of the multievent Street Challenge mode. In the game's new Dunk Contest , the court and environment are set up to have the presence of, in Mozell's words, "nothing short of a rock concert" with dramatic lighting and loud crowds. Players can place obstacles on the court to make dunks more challenging and more point-worthy.

The street courts of FIFA Soccer are inspired by their origins but not based on real-life settings.

The dimensions, surfaces and surrounding buildings of NBA Street V3's courts are all made to actual specifications. Five courts have both day and night versions.

NFL Street 2's dozen fields vary in width, in length and, most importantly, in wall configurations on the sidelines. Off-the-wall play is a big part of the game.

LEBRON VS. LUIGI: NBA STARS GO HEAD TO HEAD WITH A TREE-TOPPING TRIO FROM THE MUSHROOM KINGDOM.

Known for their airborne antics since the days of Super Mario Bros. 2, Mario, Luigi and Peach put their hang time to the test as the Nintendo All-Stars in NBA Street V3, due out in February. The original Jumpman and his pals drive to the hoop and leap with the same dribble tricks and air moves as the game's real-life hoopsters, letting their personalities shine through with individual skills. "Luigi can jump higher than Mario. So, there's some legacy there," says Mozell. Mario is faster, though, and Peach is the tallest of the trio, making her better at blocking shots. The team came together as a result of meetings between EA and Nintendo, in which both companies expressed an interest in incorporating GCN-exclusive content into EA titles. This month's poster shows Mario high-stepping over NBA phenom Carmelo Anthony. All of that platform-hopping has finally paid off.

FREESTYLE FOOTY: A NEW STREET FRANCHISE ROCKS THE CONCRETE WITH INTERNATIONAL FLAIR.

Worldwide wizards of football (soccer) finesse, such as Brazil's Ronaldo, have honed their skills in matches on makeshift pitches from Amsterdam to Africa. In this March's FIFA Street, their ball-balancing, body-shaking style has a video game stage. Street soccer has earned credibility recently, partly due to shoe lines and advertisements from companies such as Adidas and Nike. The fact that the sport is in the public eye has been a boon for FIFA Street's developers. Says producer Mozell, "We wanted to make sure there was a [real-life] foundation that made the sport feel credible. We didn't want players to think that we were just arcading up FIFA 2005." Sixteen country-based teams with a total of 256 players participate in the four-on-four action.

PAVEMENT POETRY

Pimp My Ride's Xzibit lends his voice and likeness to NFL Street 2 as the host and one of the game's athletes while DJ Bobbito Garcia returns as the voice of NBA Street with, Mozell promises, fewer references to food (Garcia was perpetually hungry during the long voice sessions for NBA Street Vol. 2). New for V3 is the street verse of DJ Rich Medina, who wrote and performed introductions for each real-life court, further boosting their street cred. Street-culture touches give the game a sense of reality, making the actions of the athletes all the more incredible and even poetic. "You are better when you play a street game than you are when you play any other game," says Mozell. "You're the hero and we're going to make sure that you're doing things that you can brag about, feel good about and nobody even in the professional game can do. We're heightening the experience."